Draft Environmental Assessment for

Stevensville Bridge Fishing Access Site
Proposed Acquisition and Development

June 2018

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region 2
3201 Spurgin Road, Missoula, MT 59804

Stevensville Bridge Fishing Access Site

Acquisition and Development
Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to accept the donation of approximately 7 acres of private land in Ravalli County along the Bitterroot River at Stevensville Bridge for the purpose of providing public access to the Bitterroot River and developing a fishing access site (FAS). This FAS would be adjacent to the south of the existing Stevensville River Park, owned by the town of Stevensville. Proposed developments include: designated parking areas, gravel access road, primitive camping area, concrete vault latrine, boundary and interior fencing, bicycle/pedestrian and ADA trail connections, and informational signs. The existing area where boaters have traditionally launched would continue to serve as the designated launch. The launch area has several tiered natural gravel rises, which accommodate launching at all water levels. In addition to improving recreational opportunities along the Bitterroot River, development of the site would provide an opportunity to improve the riparian vegetation on the site by revegetating portions of the streambank denuded by past heavy recreational use.

2. Agency authority for the Proposed Action:

The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted Section (§) 87-1-605, Montana Code Annotated (MCA), which directs FWP to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. The legislature earmarked a funding account to ensure that the fishing access site program would be implemented. § 87-1-303, MCA, contains rule-making authority for FAS use, occupancy, and protection. Furthermore, § 23-1-110, MCA, and Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 12.2.433 guide public involvement and comment for the improvements at state parks and fishing access sites, which this document provides.

ARM 12.8.601 through 12.8.606 require the Department to consider the wishes of the public, the capacity of the site for development, environmental impacts, long-range maintenance, protection of natural features and impacts on tourism as these elements relate to development or improvement to fishing access sites or state parks. This document will illuminate the facets of the Proposed Action in relation to this rule. See Appendix A for the HB 495 qualification checklist.

3. Name of project:

Stevensville Bridge Fishing Access Site Proposed Acquisition and Development

4. Project sponsor:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Region 2
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
(406) 542-5500

5. Anticipated schedule:

Estimated Public Comment Period: June 2018
Estimated Decision Notice: July 2018
Commission Approval Requested to Proceed: August 2018
Estimated Commencement Date: 2018-2019
Estimated Completion Date: 2018-2019
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 35%

6. Location:

The proposed Stevensville Bridge Fishing Access Site is located in Ravalli County, Montana, on the Bitterroot River, just north of State Highway 269 (Stevensville Cutoff Road) and approximately 1 mile northwest of Stevensville (and approximately 25 miles south of Missoula). The proposed FAS is in the SW1/4 of Section 22, Township 9 North, Range 20 West (Figures 1 and 2).

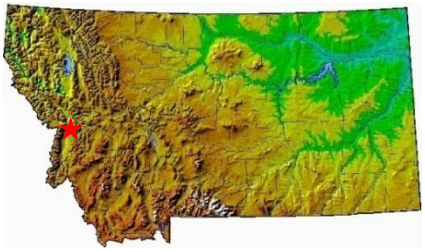


Figure 1. General location of proposed Stevensville Bridge FAS in the state of Montana.

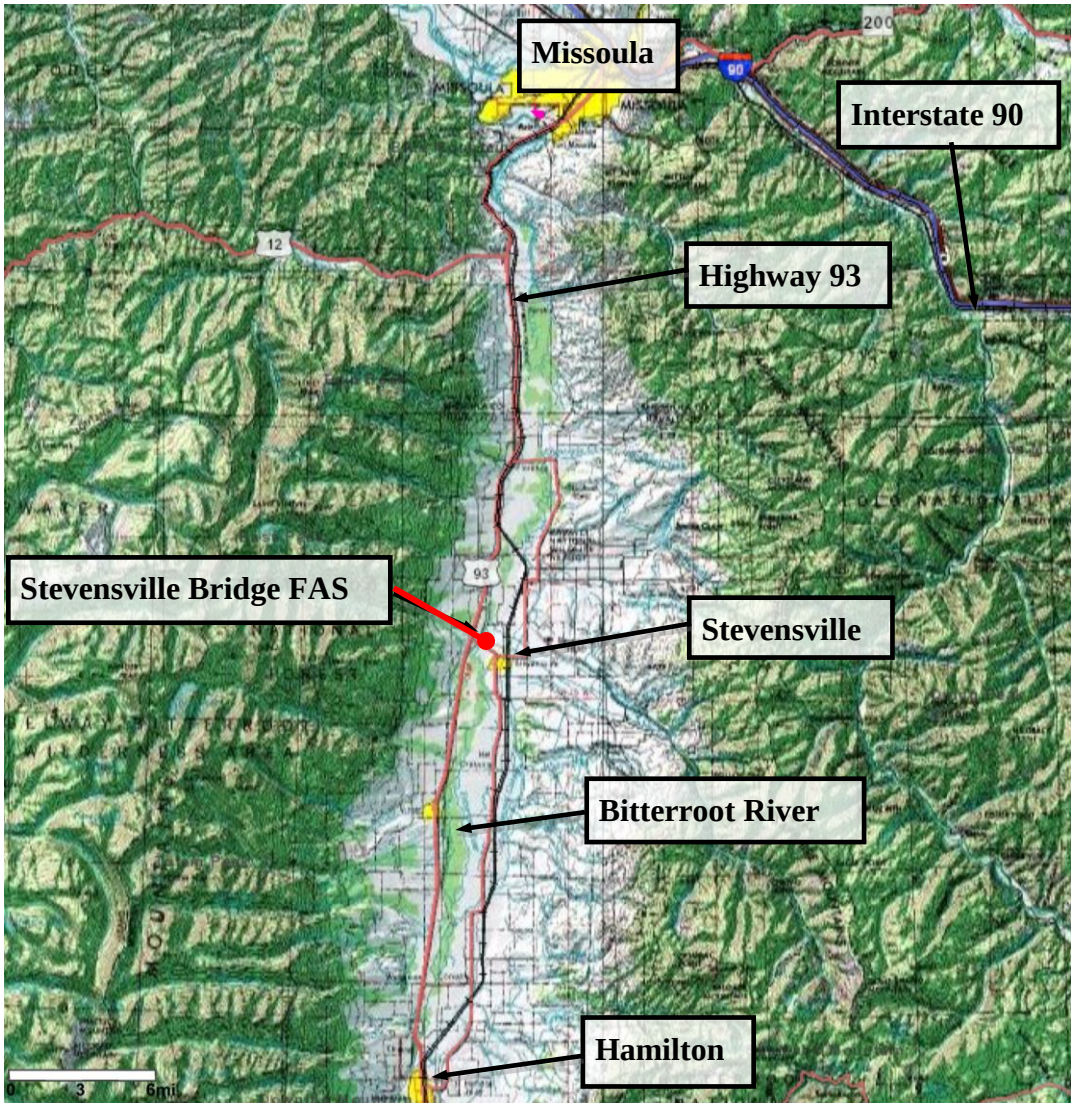


Figure 2. Location of proposed Stevensville Bridge FAS in the Bitterroot Valley.

7. Project size--estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

	Acres		Acres
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	0
Residential	0		
Industrial	0	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	0
(b) Open Space/	6	Dry cropland	0
Woodlands/Recreation		Forestry	0
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	½	Rangeland	0
Areas		Other	

8. Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdiction.

(a) Permits: Permits would be filed at least 2 weeks prior to project start.

Agency Name	Permit(s)
Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality	318 Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	124 Montana Stream Protection Act
Ravalli County	Floodplain Permit and Sanitation Permit

(b) Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Land Acquisition through Landowner Donation	$ 0
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks General License Fund	90,000
Wallop Breaux Federal Fund	82,000
*Total**	*$ 172,000*

**The current project budget (Total) may change as development plans are finalized.*

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
Natural Heritage Program	Species of Concern (Appendix B)
State Historic Preservation Office	Cultural Clearance
Ravalli County Weed District	Weed Management Coordination

9. Narrative summary of the Proposed Action:

Bitterroot River

The Bitterroot River, a tributary of the Clark Fork River, originates at the confluence of the East Fork Bitterroot River and the West Fork Bitterroot River near Connor, Montana. It flows 84 miles north through the Bitterroot Valley to its confluence with the Clark Fork River at Missoula. The Clark Fork is a tributary to the Columbia River, which joins the Pacific Ocean along the Oregon/ Washington border. With the Sapphire Mountains to the east and Bitterroot Mountains to the west, the Bitterroot Valley is especially scenic, contributing to its popularity for angling as well as for tourism and other recreational activities. The flows of the Bitterroot River as well as Skalkaho Creek and Lolo Creek, its primary tributaries, are often influenced by withdrawals for irrigation and rural water use.

The Bitterroot River is named for the bitterroot plant, *Lewisia rediviva,* whose fleshy taproot was an important food source for native Americans and was later named the Montana State flower. French trappers knew the plant as racine amere (bitter root). The Salish called the river Spet-lum for “Place of the Bitterroot” and In-shi-ttogh-tae-tkhu for “Willow River,” and early Jesuit priest, Father De Smet,

named it St. Mary's River. By the time of Washington Territory surveys by Governor Isaac Stevens in 1853, the name had been translated to Bitterroot River. Fort Owen, founded in 1841 and considered the first European settlement in Montana, is now a Montana State Park and is located 1/2 mile east of the proposed Stevensville Bridge FAS (Figure 3).

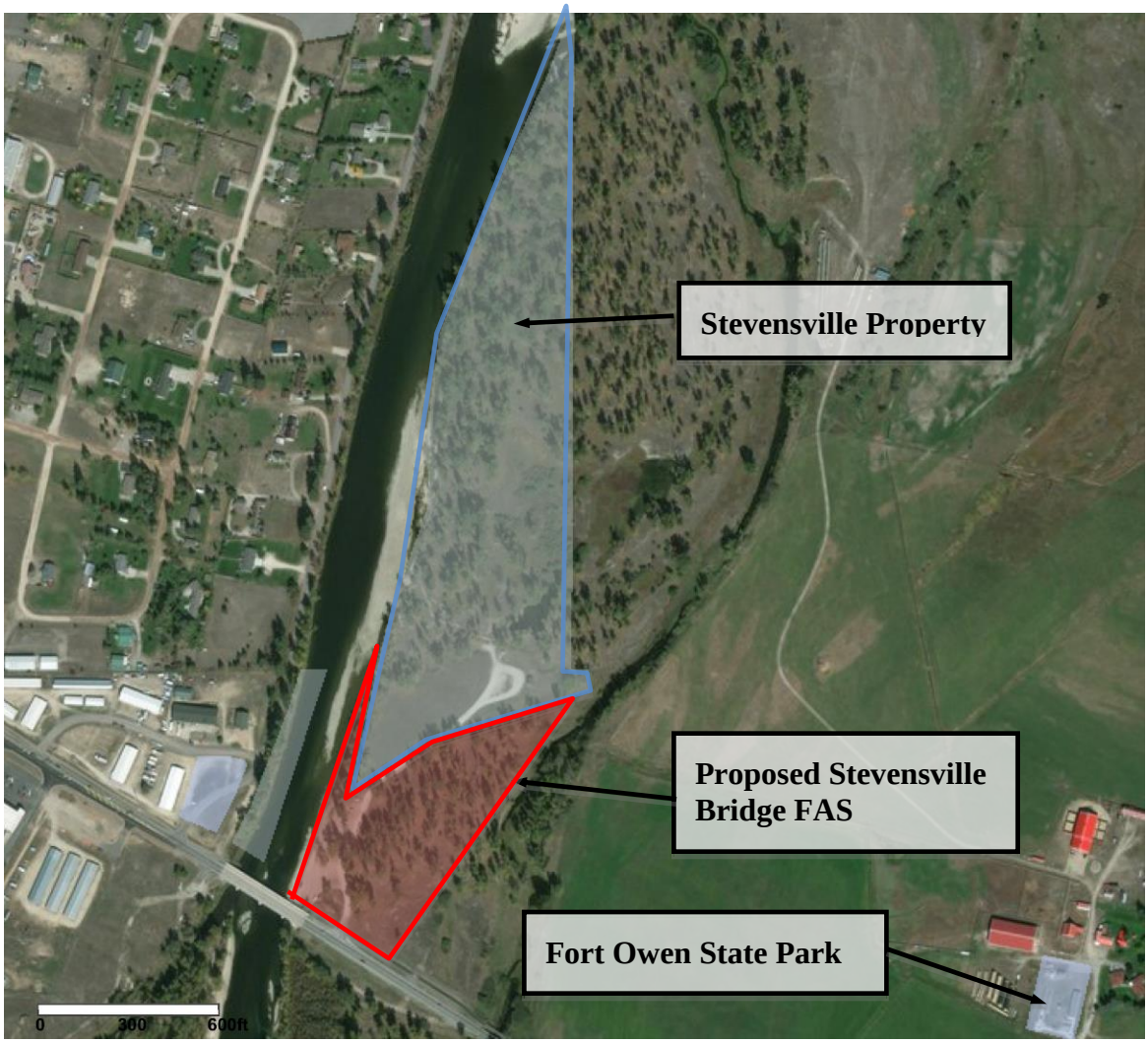


Figure 3. Parcel proposed for the Stevensville Bridge FAS acquisition (red outline; boundaries are approximate).

The Bitterroot River is prized by fly fishermen along its entire length and is the third-most fly-fished river in Montana behind the Madison and Big Horn rivers. The proposed Stevensville Bridge FAS is located on the Bitterroot River at river mile 35; it would be the only FAS with a boat launch between Florence Bridge FAS (river mile 23 downstream) and Bell Crossing FAS (river mile 40.5 upstream).

The entire Bitterroot River and its tributaries are open to angling from the third Saturday in May through November 30, according to the Montana 2018 Fishing Regulations. According to recent FWP surveys, the estimated average number of angler days per year from 2009 to 2015 on the 38-mile stretch from the mouth (river mile 0) to Bell Crossing FAS (river mile 38) was 36,447, with a low of 30,445 in 2015 and a high of 41,169 in 2011. The regional (FWP Region 2) ranking for this river stretch averaged the 3rd most fished body of water, and the state ranking for this stretch of river

averaged the 15th most fished body of water in Montana out of more than 1,400 stream reaches, lakes, and reservoirs in Montana surveyed annually by FWP. Because the proposed Stevensville Bridge FAS would provide much needed public access to this stretch of the Bitterroot River, it would likely be frequently used as a put-in and take-out site for floaters and boaters, as well as for anglers on the river.

Details of the Proposed Action

The approximately 7-acre Stevensville Bridge FAS proposed for FWP acquisition is currently located on private land (MGY Ranch, LLC) that has been historically used for agricultural purposes and wildlife habitat. Previous and current landowners have informally allowed public access to the Bitterroot River at this site for many years (with no facilities or improvements). Currently, a pioneered boat launch (Figure 4) and a pioneered parking area are located on the proposed acquisition site. The unimproved access road that crosses the private land also provides access to the adjacent Stevensville River Park (hereafter, River Park) to the north, which is owned and managed by the town of Stevensville (Figure 3, "Stevensville Property"). Portions of the riverbank at the proposed FAS are denuded of native riparian vegetation due to heavy recreational use (Figure 5). The site is popular and heavily used for angling, floating, swimming, picnicking, wildlife viewing, and dog walking.

FWP proposes to accept the donation of approximately 7 acres of private land along the Bitterroot River at Stevensville Bridge for the purpose of providing public access to the Bitterroot River and developing a fishing access site. Under the Proposed Action (Figure 6, Alternative B), developments would include: designated parking areas; improved access road; a primitive camping area for RVs, camp trailers and tents; concrete vault latrine; boundary signing and fencing; pathway from the existing bicycle path along the adjacent highway; and informational signs. (Note; Figure 7 depicts Alternative C, which is not the proposed action; see Section 10 for the 3 Alternatives.) All roads and parking areas would be graveled surfaces. In addition to improving recreational opportunities along the Bitterroot River, development of the site would provide an opportunity to restore the riparian vegetation on the site by revegetating portions of the streambank denuded by heavy recreational use in the past.

Parking on the west side of the access road would be limited to five or six stalls to reduce compaction of soils in riparian areas and allow vegetation regrowth. Most of the new parking would be developed on the east side of the current access road, with additional overflow parking for approximately 8-12 vehicles being added to the town's River Park property, contingent on the town's required processes and approval (Figure 8). The parking area on River Park is also under consideration for designated shuttle-vehicle parking. Additional parking could potentially be developed on the west side of the river within the town and Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) property. However, no analysis of that possibility was considered in this draft EA, but it is noted here for future reference purposes.

Development of the proposed campground loop and installation of the vault latrine would require Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Ravalli County, and Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) review and approval of FWP's design. In the interim, FWP anticipates increased use of the River Park's existing latrine and would work cooperatively with the town to compensate for the increase in use. Once a final design is decided on between all involved parties, it would be submitted to those agencies for approval. These can be lengthy permitting processes and are expected to extend beyond the 30-day public review/comment period of this EA. However, the review process may be less exhaustive in this case because, in keeping with FAS standards, the proposed campground loop would be primitive. FAS amenities would be limited to picnic tables and fire rings and would not include potable water, electrical hook-ups, sewage disposal facilities or a host campground-attendant site. This could potentially be a future project as well as the addition of more campsites if funding is available.

An additional area designated specifically for tent camping to accommodate people traveling on bicycles, motorbikes, and watercraft is contemplated for a future project in cooperation with the town of Stevensville (Figures 6 & 7, “potential future . . . camping”).

Figure 4. View of existing pioneered boat launch at site of the proposed Stevensville Bridge FAS

Figure 5. The Bitterroot River bank has eroded due to heavy use at the proposed Stevensville Bridge FAS.

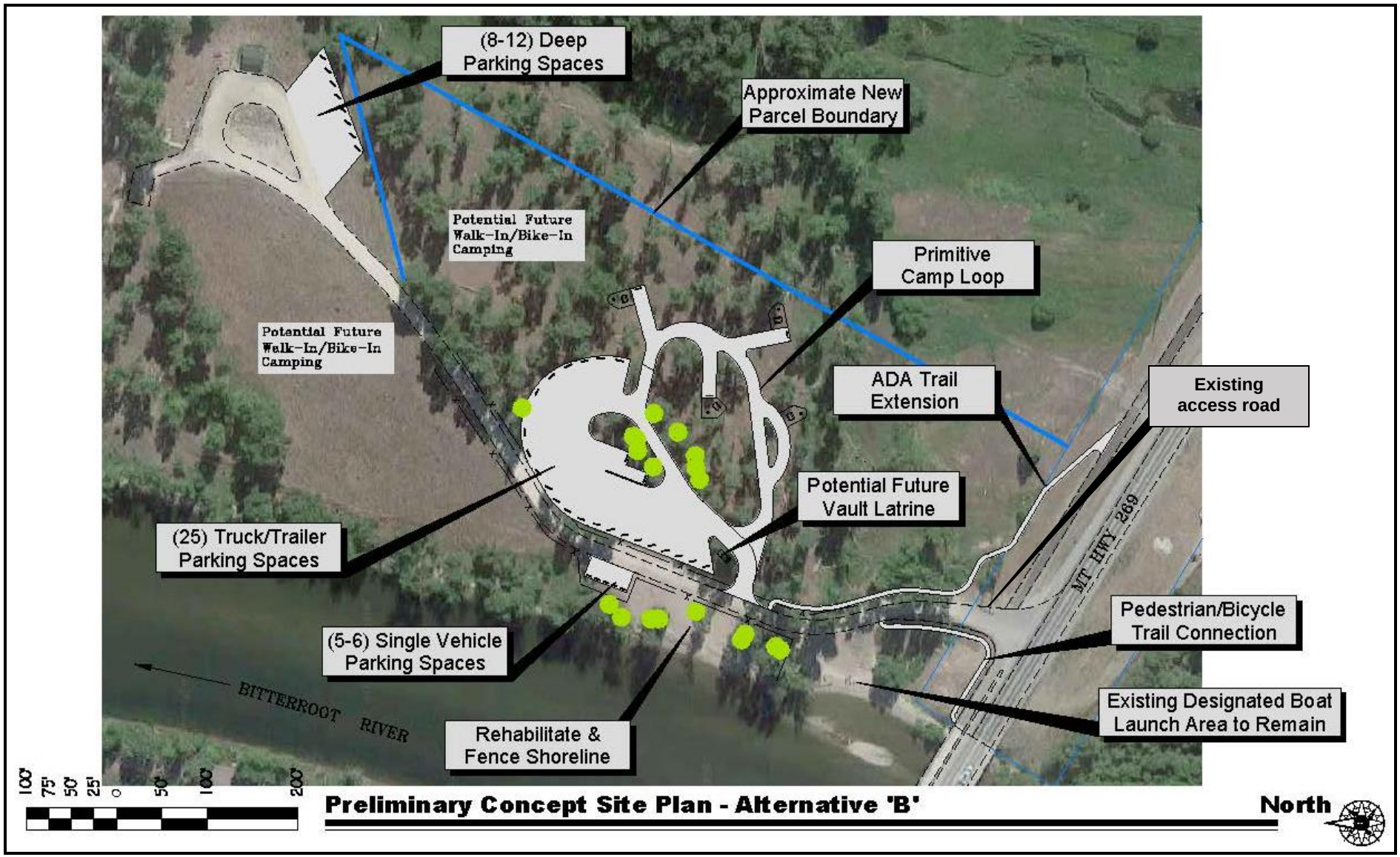


Figure 6. Preliminary Concept Site Plan for development of the proposed Stevensville Bridge FAS; ***Proposed Action (Alternative B; see Section 10).***

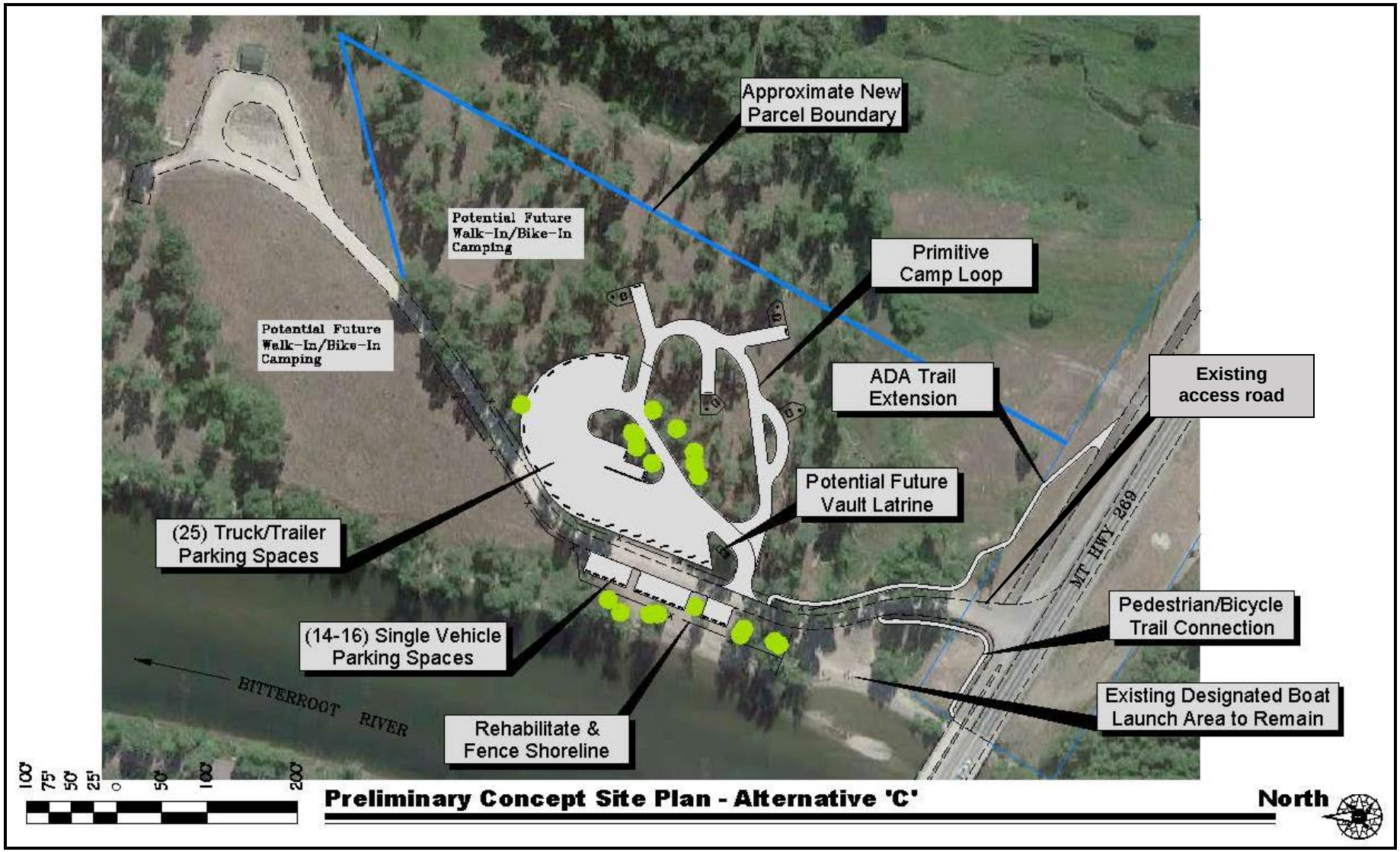


Figure 7. Preliminary Concept Site Plan for development of the proposed Stevensville Bridge FAS; *Alternative C (see Section 10).*

Figure 8. Proposed parking area location on town of Stevensville River Park property; Proposed Action (Alternative B)

The existing access road off State Highway 269 and into the proposed FAS would continue to be used under the proposed action. During the earlier scoping process, including a public meeting FWP held in Stevensville[1], FWP received an alternative development plan (Appendix D) from a member of the public, which included the access road being relocated towards the east on the donated parcel. That proposed plan was contemplated but not considered further due to the prohibitive cost, additional delays it would cause in construction, and the environmental impacts of developing a new road in an area that periodically floods.

The town of Stevensville's existing road easement (right-of-way across the private parcel) to its River Park would be retained under any alternative. New bicycle/pedestrian and ADA trails would come off the existing nonmotorized trail along State Highway 269 into the site. This would accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians, as well as providing disabled (ADA, Americans with disability Act) access, and provide a safer route into the site by reducing their interaction with highway vehicular traffic.

FWP would confer with MDT regarding potentially adding one or more safety measures on the adjacent highway that could potentially include a turn lane, flashing lights, signage, and/or a reduction of the speed limit at this location.

[1] See Appendix C for a summary of comments and questions made at the public meeting held on May 2, 2018 in Stevensville.

The property would be managed under existing FWP public use regulations. Management of the FAS would include routine maintenance, control of vehicles and firearms, and other accepted FWP recreation area management policies. Protection of the natural resources, the health and safety of visitors, and consideration of neighboring properties would all be considered and incorporated into development plans for this site. The FAS would be available for day use as well as overnight camping. Development of Stevensville Bridge FAS would provide public access to the Bitterroot River for fishing, boating, and floating and provide additional recreational opportunities for camping, swimming, hiking, dog walking, picnicking, and wildlife viewing.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action.
If no action was taken, FWP would not accept the donation of the 7-acre parcel and the proposed developments would not constructed. Public recreational access to this stretch of the Bitterroot River would continue to be limited and at the discretion of the private landowners, and public recreational opportunities for boating, fishing, floating, swimming, picnicking, camping, wildlife viewing, and walking along the Bitterroot River would also continue to be limited. Continued erosion of the existing pioneered parking area, unimproved access road, and riverbank would continue to contribute to sedimentation of the Bitterroot River.

Alternative B: Acquisition and extended development—Proposed Action.
FWP would accept the donation of approximately 7 acres of private land along the Bitterroot River at Stevensville Bridge for the purpose of providing public access to the river and developing a fishing access site. Proposed developments at the FAS would include: designated parking areas, a gravel access road, primitive campsites, a concrete vault latrine, boundary and interior fencing, a pathway, and informational signs (Figure 6). A portion of the development (overflow parking and existing latrine) would be on the town of Stevensville's land, immediately adjacent to the north of the donated land. The existing area on the donated land, where boaters have traditionally launched, would continue to serve as the designated launch. The launch area has several tiered, natural gravel rises, which accommodate launching at all water levels. FWP would work cooperatively with the town of Stevensville to provide parking and sanitation facilities.

Alternative C: Acquisition with restricted development
Under this alternative, FWP would accept donation of approximately 7 acres of private land along the Bitterroot River, but all development and FAS facilities would be limited to the new FWP land (Figure 7). This alternative would occur if the town of Stevensville chooses not to (or is not able to) participate in the FAS development project. In other words, the town's River Park would remain separate and not be a part of the FAS development.

11. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

FWP would employ Best Management Practices (BMP) for FASs, which are designed to reduce or eliminate sediment delivery to waterways during construction (Appendix E). FWP would develop the final design and specifications for the proposed project. All county, state and federal permits listed in Part I.8(a) above would be obtained by FWP as required. A private contractor selected through the State's contracting processes would complete the construction.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				1a.
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		Yes Positive	1b.
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				1c.
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?			X		Yes Positive	1d.
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

1a. The proposed project would not affect existing soil patterns, structures, productivity, fertility, erosion, compaction, or instability. Soil and geologic substructure would remain stable during and after the proposed work.

1b. Erosion of the unimproved access road and pioneered parking area would improve due to the proposed improvements to the access road and designated graveled parking areas. During construction, some minor modifications to the existing soil features would be required for construction of the parking areas, camping area, and access road. Disturbed areas would be seeded with a native seed mix to minimize erosion and sediment delivery to the Bitterroot River and the spread of noxious weeds. The property is currently managed for wildlife habitat and is not in agricultural production. The proposed project would not affect soil productivity or fertility. FWP Best Management Practices (BMP) would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize erosion (Appendix E).

The proposed acquisition and development would improve erosion and deterioration of the site by controlling use, improving the access road and parking areas to minimize erosion, and re-vegetating disturbed soils.

1c. No unique geologic or physical features would be altered by the proposed project.

1d. The proposed project would have temporary and minor adverse impacts on the bank of the Bitterroot River. Minor amounts of sediment may enter the river during construction work on the parking area and access road. Upon completion, erosion and sedimentation to the river would be improved. In addition, the proposed streambank stabilization would reduce erosion of the site and sedimentation of the river.

2. AIR Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X		Yes	2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				2b.
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regulations? (Also see 2a.)		X				2e.

2a. Dust may be temporarily generated during construction of the parking areas, camping area, and access road. If additional materials were needed off-site, loading at the source site would generate minor amounts of dust. FWP would follow FWP BMP during all phases of construction to minimize risks and reduce dust. See Appendix E for the BMP. Diesel equipment would be used to implement the proposed project. There would be a temporary increase in diesel exhaust. If the proposed project were implemented, odors from diesel exhaust would dissipate rapidly. The impacts would be short term and minor.

2b. FWP would regularly maintain the latrine to minimize objectionable odors.

2e. The proposed project would have no impact on air quality in the vicinity of Stevensville Bridge FAS and would not result in any discharge that could conflict with federal or state are quality regulations.

3. WATER Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?			X		Yes Positive	3a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		Yes	3b.
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?			X		Yes	3d.
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?			X		Yes	3h.
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)			X		X	3l.
m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)			X		Yes	3m.

3a. Construction of the proposed developments may cause a temporary, localized increase in turbidity in the Bitterroot River. However, the proposed graveled parking areas, graveled access road, and riverbank revegetation would reduce sediment discharge to the Bitterroot River. FWP would obtain a Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) 318 Authorization Permit for Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity. FWP BMPs would be followed during all construction (Appendix E).

3b. Construction of designated parking areas, camping area, and gravel access road may alter surface runoff. The proposed project would be designed to minimize any effect on surface water, surface runoff, and drainage patterns. FWP BMP would be followed (Appendix E).

3d. There may be a minor, temporary increase of runoff during construction. FWP BMP would be followed (Appendix E).

3h. The use of heavy equipment during construction may result in a slight risk of contamination from petroleum products and a temporary increase in sediment delivery to the river. FWP BMPs would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize these risks (Appendix E).

3l. According to the Ravalli County Floodplain Administrator, the entire proposed project site would be located within the floodway of the Bitterroot River, as shown on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Map

#30081C0215D, effective date January 16, 2015. The proposed parking area, access road, and camping area would be located within the 100-year floodplain, with a 1% annual chance of a flood hazard. Permits from FWP, DEQ, and Ravalli County would be obtained to insure the proposed project would follow federal, state, and county floodplain and water quality regulations.

3m. All impacts to water quality resulting from construction would be temporary. Water quality of the Bitterroot River could improve because of the proposed project by revegetating the riparian plant community and by reducing sediment delivery to the river and riverbank erosion.

4. VEGETATION **Will the proposed action result in?**	**IMPACT**					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		Yes Positive	4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				4b.
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				4d.
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		Yes	4e.
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				4f.
g. Other:						

4a. The proposed project would have positive impacts on the plant communities and diversity of the site by reestablishment of the riparian plant community along the Bitterroot River. In addition, disturbed areas would be reseeded wherever possible to reduce erosion and weed establishment and to encourage the growth of native riparian plant communities. A parking area would be constructed on sites already disturbed by pioneered recreational use over the last 50 years. Development of the access road, parking area, and camping area would have a minor impact on the vegetation and a minimal number of trees and shrubs would be removed during construction. Because the construction area is small, impacts from construction would be minor.

4b. The proposed project would not alter the composition of plant communities at the site.

The primary ecological system found on Stevensville Bridge FAS is Nothern Rocky Mountain Lower Montane Riparian Woodland and Shrublans, with small areas of Rocky Mountain Lower Montane, Foothill, and Valley Grassland, as defined by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP), and is dominated by black cottonwood and ponderosa pine. Common native plant species found on the proposed FAS site include black cottonwood, ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, Rocky Mountain juniper, sandbar willow, snowberry, red osier dogwood, Wood's rose, and western yarrow.

Common introduced species found on the property include smooth brome, Kentucky bluegrass, cheatgrass, and dandelion. Weed species found throughout the site include spotted knapweed, a Noxious Weed, and cheatgrass, a Regulated Species, as classified by the Montana Department of Agriculture.

4c. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's (MNHP) Species of Concern database found seven Montana plant Species of Concern within the vicinity of Stevensville Bridge FAS, including Coville Indian paintbrush, chaffweed, shining flatsedge, western pearl-flower, cup clover, and woolly clover.

4d. No portion of the property is currently under agricultural production

4e. Spotted knapweed, a Noxious Weed as designated by the Montana Department of Agriculture, and populations of invasive cheatgrass, Regulated Species, are found along the Bitterroot River and throughout the riparian forest. In conjunction with the Ravalli County Weed Department, FWP would implement the Statewide Integrated Weed Management Plan using chemical, biological, and mechanical methods to control weeds on the property. Weed management would also include the establishment of native vegetation to prevent the spread of weeds. Vehicles would be restricted to the parking areas, access roads, and camp sites, which would be maintained as weed-free, and vehicles would not be allowed on undisturbed areas to minimize the spread of noxious weeds. Weed control costs for Stevensville Bridge FAS in 2018 would be approximately $2,000, which includes spraying by both FWP and Ravalli County Weed Department.

4f. A search of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey on February 5, 2018, found that no portion of the proposed Stevensville Bridge FAS is classified as Prime Farmland, Prime Farmland if Irrigated, or Prime Farmland of Local or Statewide Importance and the site has never been plowed for agricultural purposes.

A search of the MNHP Wetland and Riparian Mapping Program on February 5, 2018 and a site visit by FWP staff found that no wetland is located on the project site, though over 6 acres are classified as Riparian Lotic Forest and approximately ½ acre is classified as Riparian Lotic Emergent. The site is dominated by black cottonwood and ponderosa pine with riparian shrubs along the Bitterroot River. Because the site has been previously disturbed by the Stevensville Cutoff Road, the access road, the Stevensville Bridge, a pioneered parking area and boat launch, and heavy public recreational use, development of the proposed FAS would have minor impacts on the riparian vegetation found along the Bitterroot River. In fact, the proposed revegetation of the Bitterroot River bank would improve the riparian plant community along the river.

5. FISH/WILDLIFE **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT**					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				5a.
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				5b.
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				5c.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?			X		Yes Positive	5f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		X				5h.
i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or expo any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		X				5i.

5a. The proposed developments are designed to minimize impacts to wildlife habitat. A minimal number of trees and shrubs would be removed for construction of the parking areas, access road, and camping area and efforts would

be made to preserve all large healthy trees and snags where possible. Construction would take place in fall and winter to avoid disturbance to nesting birds. This stretch of the Bitterroot River is not considered Critical Habitat for any wildlife species, though it is considered Critical Habitat for the Threatened Bull Trout.

5b,c The proposed project would have no impact on the diversity or abundance of game or non-game wildlife species. Common wildlife species whose habitat distribution overlaps the proposed Stevensville Bridge FAS include white-tailed and mule deer, mountain lion, black bear, beaver, northern river otter, bald eagle, osprey, sandhill crane, ring-necked pheasants, wild turkeys, common merganser, common goldeneye, and great blue heron. A wide variety of resident and migratory bird species use or travel through the area on a seasonal basis, including a variety of raptors, waterfowl, and songbirds.

According to Chris Clancy (FWP Region 2 Fisheries Biologist for the Bitterroot River), and a review of Montana Fisheries Information System (MFISH) database, common game fish found in the Bitterroot River in the vicinity of Stevensville Bridge FAS include Brown Trout, Rainbow Trout, Westslope Cutthroat Trout, and Mountain Whitefish. In addition, Brook Trout and Northern Pike are rarely found in this stretch of the Bitterroot River. Even though the Bitterroot River is classified as Critical Habitat for Bull Trout, Bull Trout have not been found through FWP electrofishing in this reach since sampling began in 1989. Bull Trout are considered incidental in this reach of the Bitterroot River. Common non-game species found in this reach include Largescale Sucker, Longnose Sucker, Longnose Dace, Redside Shiner, Slimy Sculpin, and Northern Pike Minnow. Due to its small scale, the proposed project is unlikely to impact the fishery or aquatic habitat of the Bitterroot River.

5f. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) element occurrence database indicates occurrences of Bull Trout (listed as Threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)); bald eagle (listed as DM by the USFWS), within the proposed project site. No other occurrences of federally ranked, or considered for ranking, animal or plant species have been found within the vicinity of the proposed project site. The search indicated that Western Cutthroat Trout, great blue heron, American bittern, veery, brown creeper, bobolink, pileated woodpecker, black-necked stilt, Lewis's woodpecker, black-crowned night-heron, little brown myotis, Townsend's big-eared bat, western skink, western toad, and hooked sawfly, Montana animal Species of Concern, have been observed in or near the proposed project site.

According to Chris Clancy, listed as Threatened by the USFWS, and Westslope Cutthroat Trout, a Montana Species of Concern, probably do not spawn in the Bitterroot River in the vicinity of Stevensville Bridge FAS, though they occasionally migrate through this reach of the river. Even though this reach of the Bitterroot River is classified as Critical Habitat for bull trout by the USFWS, the proposed project would not negatively impact Bull Trout or Westslope Cutthroat Trout. Rising water temperatures and sedimentation over the last 50 years as well as disturbance from recreational use and nearby agriculture, highways, and development have degraded Bull Trout habitat. The introduction of non-native trout, particularly Brown Trout and Rainbow Trout, has probably caused negative impacts to the native trout. The pioneered boat launch would have no additional impacts on the Bitterroot River channel and the footprint is so small that the impacts would not be measurable. Additional angling pressure could occur leading to incidental mortality of Bull Trout, but access to this portion of the river is already available for floating, inner tubing, wade fishing, swimming, and picnicking so additional impact would likely be negligible. The proposed project could improve streambank habitat by reducing the sediment delivery to the river by re-vegetating the riverbank and developing the parking area and access road, but the effect on the fish population would not be measurable. If additional angling pressure does occur, it may provide additional fishing license sales. Funds from these license dollars would put additional management and restoration work on the ground, providing benefits to bull trout in Montana. The potential of increasing angler participation can also provide more political support for Bull Trout management and protection in the future. These benefits likely offset any impacts the project may have.

According to Rebecca Mowry, FWP Region 2 Wildlife Biologist, the proposed project is unlikely to impact bald eagle. The nearest bald eagle nest is approximately 1 mile downstream of the FAS, which is outside of the recommended 0.5-mile distance in the Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan, indicating the proposed project would have no effect on bald eagles. While bald eagles were officially delisted in 2007, the USFWS has jurisdiction protecting this species under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). In addition, the proposed project is also unlikely to impact bald eagle as this species are accustomed to some level of disturbance in the area. The area surrounding the FAS has been disturbed by the Stevensville Cutoff Road, the Stevensville Bridge, nearby agricultural activities; nearby commercial and residential development, and pioneered recreational use of the site for years. According to Rebecca Mowry, the proposed project is also unlikely to impact great blue heron, American bittern, veery, brown creeper, bobolink, pileated woodpecker, black-necked stilt, Lewis's woodpecker, black-crowned night-heron, little brown myotis, Townsend's big-eared bat, western skink, western toad, and hooked sawfly because the proposed FAS is small, the site does not provide habitat that would support these species, or the species have become adjusted to the long-term disturbance of the site.

The USFWS designated five animal species and one plant species as needing or potentially needing additional habitat protection in Ravalli County. In addition to bull trout, Canada lynx, yellow-billed cuckoo, and grizzly bear have been listed as Threatened (LT) by the USFWS, defined as species that are likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range. Wolverine is listed as a proposed species (P) defined as any species that is proposed in the Federal Register to be listed as Threatened or Endangered, and whitebark pine is listed as a Candidate (C), defined as species with sufficient information and biological status and threats to propose to list it as threatened and endangered. The proposed acquisition and development of the Stevensville Bridge FAS would have no impact on these species because the site does not provide preferred habitat for these species.

According to Tyler Parks, FWP Region 2 Wolf Biologist, Stevensville Bridge FAS is within the habitat of the gray wolf. Currently there are packs with a home range that overlaps the project area. While it is possible for wolves to travel through the project area, none have been recently sighted in the immediate area. The wolf population in Montana is strong and wolves may pass through just about any area including this site. FWP has no concerns with this project impacting gray wolves.

5h. Bull Trout is the only threatened or endangered species observed near the proposed project area (Appendix B, Native Species Report). According to recent FWP surveys and Chris Clancy, Bull Trout probably do not spawn in this reach of the Bitterroot River and only occasionally move through this reach. Even though the Bitterroot River is designated as Critical Habitat for Bull Trout, the project area has been highly disturbed for years from recreational use, residential and commercial development, agriculture, and proximity to Stevensville and U.S. Highway 93. As a result, it is unlikely that the proposed project would have any negative impact on bull trout.

5i. No wildlife species would be imported or exported to the area as a result of the proposed development. This project only involves the acquisition and improvement of the Stevensville Bridge FAS and would not promote the introduction or spread of invasive species.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT**					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X		Yes	6a.
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?			X		Yes	6b.
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				

6a. Construction equipment would cause a temporary, minor increase in noise levels at the project site. Any increase in noise level at the construction site would be short term and minor.

6b. Stevensville Bridge FAS is located within 1 mile of the town of Stevensville and is within ¼ mile of a residential development, with the closest residence across the river from the proposed FAS and another 40 residences and ranches within 1/2 mile. A commercial development is also located across the river from the proposed FAS. Because the site has been used for recreation for over 50 years, the proposed acquisition would have no additional impact on noise in the vicinity of the proposed Stevensville Bridge FAS. The minor and temporary increase of noise levels during construction may be heard by nearby neighbors and visitors, though this is an area already impacted by noise from traffic, residential and commercial development, and seasonal farm equipment. FWP would follow the guidelines of the good neighbor policy, all of which would mitigate increased noise levels and would limit construction to periods of low visitation to minimize disturbance to others.

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				7a.
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				7d.

7a. Land use would not change in the vicinity of Stevensville Bridge so the proposed project would have no impact on the productivity or profitability of the FAS.

7d. The proposed project would have no adverse affect on nearby residences.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		Yes	8a.
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X		Yes Positive	8c.
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)			X		Yes	8d.

8a. Physical disturbance of the soil during construction could encourage the establishment of additional noxious weeds on the site. In conjunction with the Ravalli County Weed District, FWP would implement an integrated approach to control noxious weeds, as outlined in the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan. The integrated plan uses a combination of biological, mechanical, and herbicidal treatments to control noxious weeds. The use of herbicides would be in compliance with application guidelines to minimize the risk of chemical spills or water contamination and applied by people trained in safe handling techniques.

There is a minor and temporary risk of fuel or oil from heavy equipment accidently being released into the flood plain during construction. Contractors would have absorbent materials on site to minimize any hydrocarbon releases, as well as conduct startup inspection of all hydraulic lines and cylinder seals daily to reduce the potential for a release. FWP would follow FWP BMP during all phases of construction to minimize risks (Appendix E).

8c. The proposed project would improve public safety by providing adequate parking and improving traffic flow, thereby minimizing vehicle conflicts between visitors.

8d. The use of herbicides to control noxious weeds could result in temporary water contamination from an inadvertent spill. The use of herbicides would be in compliance with application guidelines, outlined in the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan, to minimize this risk and would be applied by people trained in safe handling techniques.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT**					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				9c.
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				9d.
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				9e.

9c. The proposed project would improve recreation in the area by providing permanent access to the Bitterroot River, by improving parking, and by providing camping facilities. This would benefit local retail and service businesses (Appendix F, Tourism Report).

9d. There would be no change in commercial use of the site.

9e. The proposed developments would give boaters and floaters another opportunity to access this stretch of the Bitterroot River. Since it is likely that the proposed project would increase recreational use of the site, there could be a small increase in traffic on Stevensville Cutoff Road on the short section between Highway 93 and the FAS. Otherwise, the proposed project would have little or no impact on traffic on Stevensville Cutoff Road and any impacts to traffic would be minor and concentrated on weekends during the peak season. The proposed project also would not alter the distribution of population in the area.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES **Will the proposed action result in:**	**IMPACT**					
	Unknown	**None**	**Minor**	**Potentially Significant**	**Can Impact Be Mitigated**	**Comment Index**
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				10a.
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				10b.
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. Define projected revenue sources		X				10e.
f. Define projected maintenance costs.		X				10f.

10a. The proposed acquisition and development of the Stevensville Bridge FAS would have no impact on public services or utilities. Electricity, potable water, or sewage disposal would not be provided at the proposed primitive campground. The proposed developments would require periodic maintenance by FWP and the site would continue to be patrolled by FWP.

10b. The proposed project would have no effect on the local and state tax base and revenue because FWP pays property taxes in an amount equal to that of a private individual.

10e. Approximate revenue from camping fees would be determined based on final development plans.

10f. Projected annual operating, maintenance, weed control, and personnel expense for fiscal year 2018 would be determined based on final development plans.

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X		Yes Positive	11a.
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				11b.
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			X		Yes Positive	11c.
d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		X				11d.

11a,b. By re-vegetating the riverbanks with native riparian vegetation, the proposed project would improve the aesthetic values of the FAS.

11c. The proposed project would improve recreational use of the area by improving parking facilities and camping on the FAS. This could benefit local retail and service businesses (Appendix F, Tourism Report).

11d. No designated wild or scenic rivers, trails, or wilderness areas would be impacted by the proposed developments.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		X				12d.

12a,d. Prior to the commencement of construction, FWP would contact the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and seek a concurrence from SHPO on FWP recommendations for the project. If cultural materials are discovered during construction, work would cease and SHPO would be contacted for a more in-depth investigation.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		X				13f.
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		X				13g.

During construction of the proposed project, there may be minor and temporary impacts to the physical environment, but the impacts would be short-term and the developments would benefit the community and recreational opportunities over the long-term. The proposed project would have no negative cumulative effects on the biological, physical, and human environments. When considered over the long-term, the proposed project positively impacts the public's recreational use of the popular Bitterroot River.

13f. The proposed project is designed to improve recreational facilities on the site and is not expected to generate organized opposition or substantial public controversy.

13g. The Montana DEQ 318 Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity and the FWP 124 Montana Stream Protection Act are the only state permits required for the proposed development. In addition, a Ravalli County Floodplain permit would also be required.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

During construction of the proposed project, there may be minor and temporary impacts to the physical environment, but the impacts would be short-term and the developments would benefit the community and recreational opportunities over the long-term. The proposed project would have no negative cumulative effects on the biological, physical, and human environments. When considered over the long-term, the proposed project positively impacts the public's recreational use of the popular Bitterroot River.

The minor impacts to the environment that were identified in the previous section are small in scale and would not influence the overall environment of the immediate area. The natural environment

would continue to provide habitat to transient and permanent wildlife species and would be open to the public for river access.

The proposed project would not impact the local wildlife species that frequent the property and the project would be designed to avoid conditions that stress wildlife populations. Other than bull trout, this stretch of the Bitterroot River is also not considered critical habitat for any other fish or wildlife species. Though the Bitterroot River is classified as Critical Habitat for bull trout, the proposed project would not negatively affect bull trout since this species does not spawn in this stretch, only migrates through the area, and the proposed project is small. In fact, the proposed project could improve bull trout habitat by reducing sediment delivery to the river.

Though westslope cutthroat trout, great blue heron, veery, Lewis' woodpecker, pileated woodpecker, bobolink, American bittern, black-crowned night-heron, brown creeper, black-necked stilt, little brown myotis, Townsend's big-eared bat, western skink, western toad, and hooked snowfly, Montana animal Species of Concern, have been observed in the vicinity of the proposed project site, the proposed project is unlikely to impact these species. Construction would commence in Fall 2018, well after critical nesting periods. In addition, these species are likely accustomed to disturbance from U.S. Highway 93, Stevensville Cutoff Road, agriculture, and residential and commercial development in the area for years. While it is possible for wolves to travel through the project area, none have been sighted and there is no pack located in the area, so it is unlikely that the proposed project would impact gray wolves.

Coville Indian paintbrush, Columbia water-meal, chaffweed, shining flatsedge, western pearl-flower, cup clover, and woolly clover, Montana plant Species of Concern, have been observed within 2 miles of the proposed project site. The proposed project would also have no impact on these species since the proposed Stevensville Bridge FAS does not provided preferred habitat for these species.

Soils disturbed during construction could colonize with weeds. Disturbed areas would be re-seeded with a native reclamation seed mix where to reduce the establishment of weeds. In conjunction with Ravalli County Weed Control District, FWP would implement the Statewide Integrated Weed Management Plan using chemical, biological and mechanical methods to control weeds on the property.

The proposed acquisition and development of Stevensville Bridge FAS would provide safe and convenient river access for fishing, boating, and floating in addition to improving recreational opportunities for camping, swimming, picnicking, dog-walking, and wildlife viewing. The proposed project would increase recreational use of this stretch of the popular Bitterroot River.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

Several public meetings have been held and comments from these meetings have been incorporated into this document as Appendix C. This EA represents a compilation of those comments in addition to a scientific review of the associated environmental considerations.

The public would be notified in the following manners to comment on the proposed Stevensville Bridge FAS Proposed Acquisition and Development Project, including its draft EA and alternatives:

- Two legal notices in each of these newspapers: *Bitterroot Star* (Stevensville), *Independent Record* (Helena), *Missoulian*, and *Ravalli Republic* (Hamilton).
- Public notice on FWP's webpage: http://fwp.mt.gov ("News," then "Recent Public Notices"). The Draft EA would also be available on this website, along with the opportunity to submit comments online.

- Copies would be available at the FWP Region 2 Headquarters in Missoula and the FWP State Headquarters in Helena.
- A news release would be prepared and distributed to a standard list of media outlets interested in FWP Region 2 issues. This news release would also be posted on FWP Region 2's website http://fwp.mt.gov/regions/r2/.
- Copies of this environmental assessment would be mailed (or notification of its availability emailed) to neighboring landowners and other interested parties (individuals, groups, agencies) to assure their knowledge of the Proposed Action.
- This EA may be obtained by mail from Region 2 FWP, 3201 Spurgin Rd., Missoula 59804; by phoning 406-542-5500; by emailing shrose@mt.gov; or by viewing FWP's Internet website http://fwp.mt.gov ("Recent Public Notices").

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts (none significant), which can be mitigated.

2. Duration of comment period:

The public comment period will extend for 30 (thirty) days beginning June 7, 2018. Comments must be received no later than July 6, 2018 and can be mailed to the addresses below:

FWP Region 2
Attn: Stevensville Br FAS
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
(406) 542-5500

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? No.

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this Proposed Action.

Based on an evaluation of impacts to the physical and human environment under MEPA, this environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts from the proposed project: therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis. In determining the significance of the impacts, FWP assessed the severity, duration, geographic extent, and frequency of the impact, the probability that the impact would occur or reasonable assurance that the impact would not occur. FWP assessed the growth-inducing or growth-inhibiting aspects of the impact; the importance to the state and to society of the environmental resource or value affected, any precedent that would be set as a result of an impact of the proposed project that would commit FWP to future actions; and potential conflicts with local, federal, or state laws. As this EA revealed no significant impacts from the proposed project, an EA is the appropriate level of review and an EIS is not required.

2. Person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Rory Zarling
Region 2 Fishing Access Site Manager
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
rzarling@mt.gov
(406) 542-5561

Andrea Darling
FWP EA Contractor
39 Big Dipper Drive
Montana City, MT 59634
apdarling@gmail.com

3. List of agencies or offices consulted during preparation of the EA:

Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Design and Construction
- Lands
- Legal
- Fisheries Division
- Wildlife Division

Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)
Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

APPENDICES

A. House Bill 495 Qualification Checklist (§ 23-1-110, MCA)

B. Environmental Summary Report (Montana Natural Heritage Program)

C. Stevensville Bridge FAS Public Meeting Comments

D. Alternative Plan proposed by member of the public (received by FWP on May 2, 2018)

E. Best Management Practices for Fishing Access Sites (FWP)

F. Tourism Report (Montana Department of Commerce)

APPENDIX A. House Bill 495 Qualification Checklist (§ 23-1-110, MCA)

HB495 PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date: February 28, 2018 **Person Reviewing:** Andrea Darling

Project Location: The proposed Stevensville Bridge Fishing Access Site is located on the Bitterroot River along State Highway 269 (Stevensville Cutoff Road), approximately 1 mile northwest of Stevensville, Montana and 25 miles south of Missoula in Ravalli County, SW1/4 Section 22, Township 9 North, Range 20 West.

Description of Proposed Work: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to accept the donation of approximately 7 acres of private land along the Bitterroot River at Stevensville Bridge for the purpose of providing public access to the Bitterroot River and developing a fishing access site (FAS). Proposed developments include a designated parking area, a gravel access road, a primitive camping area, boundary fencing, and informational signs.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed action or improvement is of enough significance to fall under 23-1-110 rules. (Please check all that apply and comment as necessary.)

[X] A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments: A new roadway would be built over undeveloped land within the new campground.

[ ] B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments: No new construction.

[X] C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: Yes, for the access road, campground, and parking area.

[X] D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments: The parking area will increase capacity by more than 25% from the pioneered parking on the site.

[ ] E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments: No shoreline alterations.

[ ] F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments: No new construction into the Bitterroot River.

[ ] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments: SHPO has been contacted.

[ ] H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments: No new utility lines.

[X] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments: There would be an increase of over 25% in the number of campsites.

[X] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern, including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments: Yes, the Proposed Action would change the use pattern by allowing camping in addition to day use.

If any of the above are checked, HB 495 rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.

APPENDIX B. Environmental Summary Report (Montana Natural Heritage Program)

ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMARY REPORT
MONTANA NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM
Montana Species of Concern in the Vicinity of
Stevensville Bridge Fishing Access Site

Species of Concern Terms and Definitions

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) element occurrence database (http://nris.mt.gov) indicates occurrences of bull trout and bald eagle within the proposed project site. No other occurrences of federally ranked, or considered for ranking, animal or plant species have been found within the vicinity of the proposed project site. The search indicated that westslope cutthroat trout, great blue heron, veery, Lewis' woodpecker, pileated woodpecker, bobolink, American bittern, black-crowned night-heron, brown creeper, black-necked stilt, little brown myotis, Townsend's big-eared bat, western skink, western toad, and hooked snowfly, Montana animal Species of Concern, have been observed in or near the proposed project site. In addition, Coville Indian paintbrush, Columbia water-meal, chaffweed, shining flatsedge, western pearl-flower, cup clover, and woolly clover, Montana plant Species of Concern, have been observed within 2 miles of the proposed project site. More information on these species is included below.

Montana Species of Concern. The term **"Species of Concern"** includes taxa that are at-risk or potentially at-risk due to rarity, restricted distribution, habitat loss, and/or other factors. The term also encompasses species that have a special designation by organizations or land management agencies in Montana, including: Bureau of Land Management Special Status and Watch species; U.S. Forest Service Sensitive and Watch species; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Threatened, Endangered and Candidate species.

Status Ranks (Global and State)

The international network of Natural Heritage Programs employs a standardized ranking system to denote global (**G** -- range-wide) and state status (**S**) (Nature Serve 2003). Species are assigned numeric ranks ranging from 1 (critically imperiled) to 5 (demonstrably secure), reflecting the relative degree to which they are "at-risk". Rank definitions are given below. A number of factors are considered in assigning ranks -- the number, size and distribution of known "occurrences" or populations, population trends (if known), habitat sensitivity, and threat. Factors in a species' life history that make it especially vulnerable are also considered (e.g., dependence on a specific
Pollinator).

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Endangered Species Act)- Terms and Definitions

LE. Listed endangered: Any species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
LT. Listed threatened: Any species likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
C. Candidate: Those taxa for which sufficient information on biological status and threats exists to propose to list them as threatened or endangered.

DM. Recovered, delisted, and being monitored - Any previously listed species that is now recovered, has been delisted, and is being monitored.

BGEPA. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (BGEPA) prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior, from taking bald or golden eagles, including their parts, nests, or eggs. The BGEPA provides criminal and civil penalties for persons who take, possess, sell, purchase, barter, offer to sell, purchase or barter, transport, export or import, at any time or any manner, any bald eagle ... [or any golden eagle], alive or dead, or any part, nest, or egg thereof.

MBTA. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) implements four treaties that provide for international protection of migratory birds. The statute's language is clear that actions resulting in a "taking" or possession (permanent or temporary) of a protected species is a violation of the MBTA.

BCC. Birds of Conservation Concern 2008. The 1988 amendment to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act mandates the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to identify species, subspecies, and populations of all migratory nongame birds that, without additional conservation actions, are likely to become candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act

Status Ranks	
Code	**Definition**
G1 S1	At high risk because of extremely limited and/or rapidly declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it highly vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.
G2 S2	At risk because of very limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.
G3 S3	Potentially at risk because of limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas.
G4 S4	Uncommon but not rare (although it may be rare in parts of its range), and usually widespread. Apparently not vulnerable in most of its range, but possibly cause for long-term concern.
G5 S5	Common, widespread, and abundant (although it may be rare in parts of its range). Not vulnerable in most of its range.

MFWP Conservation Need. Under Montana's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy of 2005, individual animal species are assigned levels of conservation need as follows:

Tier I. Greatest conservation need. Montana FWP has a clear obligation to use its resources to implement conservation actions that provide direct benefit to these species, communities and focus areas.

Tier II. Moderate conservation need. Montana FWP could use its resources to implement conservation actions that provide direct benefit to these species communities and focus areas.

Tier III. Lower conservation need. Although important to Montana's wildlife diversity, these species, communities and focus areas are either abundant or widespread or are believed to have adequate conservation already in place.

Tier IV. Species that are non-native, incidental or on the periphery of their range and are either expanding or very common in adjacent states.

MONTANA PLANT AND ANIMAL SPECIES OF CONCERN
IN THE VICINITY OF
STEVENSVILLE BRIDGE FISHING ACCESS SITE

1. Salvelinus confluentus (Bull Trout)

Vertebrate animal- Fish — *Habitat- Mountain Streams, Rivers, Lakes*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S2**
Global: **G4**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **LT**
U.S. Forest Service**: Threatened**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Special Status**

Element Occurrence data was reported of Bull Trout within the project area.

2. Oncorhvnchus clarkii lewisi (Westslope Cutthroat Trout)

Vertebrate animal- Fish — *Habitat- Mountain Streams, Rivers, Lakes*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S2**
Global: **G4T3**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service**: Sensitive**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

Element Occurrence data was reported of Westslope Cutthroat Trout within the project area.

3. Haliaeetus leucocephalus (Bald Eagle)

Montana Special Status Species

Vertebrate animal- Bird — *Habitat -Riparian Forest*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S4**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **DM; BGEPA; MBTA;** Global: **G5 BCC10; BCC11, BCC17**
U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: **2**

Element Occurrence data was reported of bald eagle within the project area.

4. Ardea herodias (Great Blue Heron)

Vertebrate animal- Bird — *Habitat -Riparian Forest*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S3**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service**:**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

Element Occurrence data was reported of great blue heron within the project area.

5. Botaurus lentiginosus (American Bittern)

Vertebrate animal- Bird — *Habitat –Freshwater Wetlands*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S3B**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **MBTA; BCC11; BCC17**
U.S. Forest Service**:**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: **3**

Element Occurrence data was reported of American bittern within 1 mile of the project area.

6. Catharus fuscescens (Veery)

Vertebrate animal- Bird *Habitat- Riparian Forests*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S3B**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service**:**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: **2**

Element Occurrence data was reported of veery within 1 mile of the project area.

7. Certhia americana (Brown Creeper)

Vertebrate animal- Bird *Habitat- Riparian Mixed Conifer Forests*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S3**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **MBTA**
U.S. Forest Service**:**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: **1**

Element Occurrence data was reported of brown creeper within 1 mile of the project area.

8. Dolichonyx orzivorus (Bobolink)

Vertebrate animal- Bird *Habitat- Moist Grasslands*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S3B**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service:
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: **3**

Element Occurrence data was reported of greater bobolink within 1 mile of the project area.

9. Dryocopus pileatus (Pileated Woodpecker)

Vertebrate animal- Bird *Habitat-Moist Conifer Forests*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S3**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service**:**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: **2**

Element Occurrence data was reported of pileated woodpecker within 1 mile of the project area.

10. Himantopus mexicanus (Black-necked Stilt)

Vertebrate animal- Bird *Habitat-Marshes*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S3B**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **MBTA**
U.S. Forest Service**:**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

Element Occurrence data was reported of black-necked stilt within 1 mile of the project area.

11. Melanerpes lewis (Lewis's Woodpecker)

Vertebrate animal- Bird *Habitat- Riparian Forests*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S2B**
Global: **G4**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service**:**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: **2**

Element Occurrence data was reported of Lewis's woodpecker within 1 mile of the project area.

12. Nycticorax nycticorax (Black-crowned Night-heron)

Vertebrate animal- Bird *Habitat- Ponds and Marshes*

Natural Heritage Ranks | Federal Agency Status:

State: **S3B** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **MBTA**

Global: **G5** | U.S. Forest Service**:**

U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: **3**

Element Occurrence data was reported of black-crowned night-heron within the project area.

13. Myotis lucifugus (Little Brown Myotis)

Montana Animal Species of Concern- Observed

Vertebrate animal- Mammal *Habitat- Sagebrush Generalist*

Natural Heritage Ranks | Federal Agency Status:

State: **S3** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

Global: **G3** | U.S. Forest Service**:**

U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

Element Occurrence data was reported of little brown myotis within one mile of the project area.

14. Corynorhinus townsendii (Townsend's Big-eared Bat)

Vertebrate animal

Natural Heritage Ranks | Federal Agency Status:

State: **S2** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

Global: **G4** | U.S. Forest Service**: Sensitive**

U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

Element Occurrence data was reported of Townsend's big-eared bat within 1 mile of the project area.

15. Plestiodon skiltonianus (Western Skink)

Invertebrate animal- Reptile *Habitat- Open Conifer Forests and Adjacent Grasslands*

Natural Heritage Ranks | Federal Agency Status:

State: **S3** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

Global: **G5** | U.S. Forest Service**:**

U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

Element Occurrence data was reported of western skink within 2 miles of the project area.

16. Anaxyrus boreas (Western Toad)

Vertebrate animal- Amphibian *Habitat: Wetlands, floodplain pools*

Natural Heritage Ranks | Federal Agency Status:

State: **S2** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

Global: **G4** | U.S. Forest Service**: Sensitive**

U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

Element Occurrence data was reported of Western toad within 2 miles of the project area

17. Isocapnia crinita (Hooked Snowfly)

Invertibrate animal- Insect *Habitat: Streams and Rivers*

Natural Heritage Ranks | Federal Agency Status:

State: **S2** | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

Global: **G5** | U.S. Forest Service**: Sensitive**

U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

Element Occurrence data was reported of hooked snowfly within 2 miles of the project area.

18. Castilleja covilleana (Coville Indian Paintbrush)

Vascular Plant — *Habitat: Montane Stony Slopes*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S3**
Global: **G3G4**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service**: Sensitive**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

Element Occurrence data was reported of Coville Indian paintbrush within 2 miles of the project area.

19. Centunculus minimus (Chaffweed)

Vascular Plant — *Habitat: Streams and Rivers*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S2**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service**:**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

Element Occurrence data was reported of chaffweed within 2 miles of the project area.

20. Cyperus bipartitus (Shining Flatsedge)

Vascular Plant — *Habitat: Streams and Rivers*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S1**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service**:**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

Element Occurrence data was reported of shining flatsedge within 2 miles of the project area.

21. Heterocodon rariflorum (Western Pearl-flower)

Vascular Plant — *Habitat: Montane Wetlands*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S2**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service**: Sensitive**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

Element Occurrence data was reported of western pearl-flower within 2 miles of the project area.

22. Trifolium cyathiferum (Cup Clover)

Vascular Plant — *Habitat: Wet Meadows*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S3**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service**:**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

Element Occurrence data was reported of cup clover within 2 miles of the project area.

23. Trifolium microcephalum (Woolly Clover)

Vascular Plant — *Habitat: Wet Meadows*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S3**
Global: **G3G4**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service**:**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

Element Occurrence data was reported of woolly clover within 2 miles of the project area.

24. Wolffia columbiana (Columbia water-meal)

Vascular Plant — *Habitat: Shallow Ponds and Sloughs*

Natural Heritage Ranks
State: **S2S3**
Global: **G5**

Federal Agency Status:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
U.S. Forest Service**:**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

Element Occurrence data was reported of Columbia water-meal within 2 miles of the project area.

APPENDIX C. Stevensville Bridge FAS public meeting comments

Stevensville Bridge FAS
Public Meeting Comments and Questions
May 2, 2018

1. Can we provide tent camping section for bikes or cars?
2. Can we develop an alternative entry for safer adjacent highway access?
3. Can FWP and the town develop a joint proposal to incorporate transportation planning/ROW easier?
4. Consider a host site with a power site possibly.
5. Camping demand in Bitterroot is huge-numbers are rising
6. Encourage no paving to reduce storm runoff
7. Need to see a maintenance component
8. With flooding, how would we keep gravel in place?
9. Ravalli County thanks FWP and landowner
10. Caution FWP to respect adjacent private landowner and wishes
11. Can we assure easement will be retained to town park?
12. Have maps available digitally in EA posting
13. Start first with immediate needs and progress slowly
14. Delighted with the plan-small is good start-future can include park land to provide more resources to Stevensville
15. Speed limit on highway not observed-talk to DOT [MDT, Montana Department of Transportation] about lowering
16. Boat and trailer turning in is an issue
17. Need staff sensitive to maintaining trees especially as buffer to highway
18. Downstream of launch used hard by people-need restoration/protection
19. Dumpsite could be positive add in future so do not preclude it
20. 14 single-stalls seems to be a lot, so close to bank, congested-spread out-use more of this area for day-use
21. Can shuttle vehicles go to other locations or overflow in town parking lot
22. Can Parks Board sit on FWP design team to consider entire site to address all users (passive/active) to separate users wisely?
23. Include Super 1 regarding parking
24. Have DOT [MDT] signage and flashing light on the adjacent highway access or center turn lane
25. Bicyclists will have an interest in the site and bike camping

26. We don't own this land yet-found balance with the landowners-parking can/needs to be considered and set up within town time frame to allow as developed
27. As a dog walker, will there be a foot-traffic path from the bike path to the site without being on entry road? (highway to river around dump is the needed route)
28. Reclaim the dump next
29. Approach county about overflow
30. Be gracious about what we are asking for
31. Picnic tables near parking and at campsites
32. What makes this an FAS? Are we excluding others?
33. Have good fences to keep public off landowner
34. Handicap inclusion
35. Wildlife concerns – need to be sensitive to trees, especially for birds
36. Limited parking would be preferred
37. Do not allow parking of trailers on the launch area
38. Bathrooms (on FWP and town) would be valuable
39. Trash dumpster or garbage cans and doggie bags would be valuable
40. Improve the gravel access road
41. Consider moving the entry point to the east and work with the highway department to reconfigure lanes.
42. Would like the temporary boat launch on town property to be rehabbed back to a narrow walking path.
43. Address noxious weeds on town and FWP property
44. Develop a MOU with the town to share sanitation facilities, maintenance and security
45. Thank you for providing us the chance to tell you our ideas before plans are drawn
46. We know there is a limited amount of funding
47. Would like to see one alternative that downplays barriers and shows what is possible, an alternative that comes out of the time-tested recreation site planning process considering goals, users, facilities, conflicts, liabilities, maintenance, flooding, private/public partnerships.
48. Plan for all types of users

APPENDIX D. Alternative Plan proposed by member of the public (received by FWP on May 2, 2018)

Stevensville Bridge River
Park and FAS Possible
Alternative

To: Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks

Re: Stevensville Bridge Fishing Access Site

Thank you to xxx xxxxx for her spirit of community by offering a piece of her property for legal access to the Bitterroot River. And thank you to Fish Wildlife and Parks for listening to me and others over the last couple of years and providing us this chance to tell you our ideas before plans are drawn up. That is a huge step in the direction of working together for the benefit of the whole community.

Since I have a background in recreation planning, site design, and operation and maintenance of developed recreation facilities, that expertise is the basis of my comments. I find this project exciting because how we develop the Stevensville Bridge Fishing Access Site will be our legacy to future generations.

Those of us who have been involved in the discussions about this site for a while now know there are many constraints that set specific sideboards on the development options:

1. The wishes and requirements of the adjacent private property owner.
2. The limited amount of funding and specific constraints on what you can spend it on.
3. The existence of the old dump which is considered a toxic waste dump in the middle of the site.
4. Flooding and riparian issues.

These are real constraints that create unique issues and costs. Because of them, it is tempting to take a minimalist approach to how the site is developed. If you do, I ask that you do not invest much money that might create a permanent foot print. It is likely, given the fact there is little public land along the river for public access and recreational use that it won't take long for it to be inadequate to the growing demand as the population of the valley expands.

I would ask that you take a big picture look and keep the future in mind. At this stage, don't limit yourself by the assuming we will never get the kind of money or permissions to develop the site in the way it could ideally be developed. I would like to see at least one alternative that downplays potential barriers and shows what is possible. *it's* amazing how powerful a community can be if we are all behind something we all want!

I would like to see an alternative that comes out of the time-tested recreation site planning process: 1) What are the goals of the project? 2) Who are the users; what facilities does that activity require and what are the potential conflicts between users? 3) What are the assets, liabilities, and safety hazards of the site? 4) How and who will maintain the facilities and how can that maintenance burden be done most efficiently; and S) are there opportunities for a public/private partnership that should be considered in the design?

Most of the answers are obvious, but they should be presented with your proposal, so everyone understands how you came up with the design that you will take forward for formal public comment. want to go through some considerations that have come to mind over the past couple of years that I have been involved in the discussions about this site:

Design Goals:

- Design a State Park that includes an FAS, not just a place to put your boat in the water and park the boat trailer by integrating the use and operation of the Stevensville River Park with the new FAS; consider the whole area as part of the planning area.
- Minimize conflict between users
- Fix potential safety and/or law enforcement problems
- Plan for flooding
- Protect the river bank and riparian habitat,
- Accommodate future expansion and potential private sector operation.
- Maximize Maintenance Efficiency in the Design

Who are the users and their experience and facility needs?

Dog walkers, bird watchers, family picnickers, lunch breakers; swimmers and puddle jumpers, trail walkers, fishermen and women, rock skippers, drift boaters, fishing guides, rafters and canoeists. There are probably others.

Is this a day use site only or is this location suitable for overnight use?

There are potential conflicts between:

- Boaters, rafters and canoeists,
- Trailered vehicle safety hazard to families and people walking across traffic to the river;
- Passive and active users;
- Commercial and non-commercial users
- Swimmers/water playing and boat launch users.

Site Issues and Potential Safety Hazards

- Wetland, Flooding, and Riparian issues
- Traffic hazards at the entrance.
- Cross traffic hazards between passive users and boat launches activities.
- Existence of a toxic waste dump that potentially limits the planning area.
- Tree hazards.

Facility Design Ideas

Consider incorporating these options in at least one alternative:

1. Move the access road away from the bridge.

   This would:

   - Mitigate the traffic hazard that currently exists with turning into the site. The access point is too close to the bridge to allow for future turn bays on the highway.
   - Provide the opportunity to separate vehicle and boat launching traffic from pedestrian access to the river.
   - Eliminate through traffic to the River Park.

- Maximize the area available for people to use next to the river instead of using it up for vehicles.

2. Rehab the beat-up zone next to the River.

   Move vehicle access away from the river's *edge,* rehab the area and dedicate it to day use.

3. Plan for One Double Vault toilet to be shared by both parking lots.

   Explore road *access,* circulation, and parking lot locations so that only one toilet would need to be serviced. This would improve maintenance efficiency.

4. Consider the dump area in the design.

   - It hogs space and it creates a visual separation from the current picnic area and the river
   - It creates a visual separation between one part of the site and the other which creates safety and security issues.
   - Move the Picnic Shelter closer to the river. It might get used more because that would make it a more enjoyable place to picnic instead of being next to a dirt parking lot.

   This is a complex issue involving a "Heinz 57" of regulatory agencies. But the rules and regulations, potential funding sources and what you can and cannot do has changed since it was originally buried. Answers often depend on who you ask and their willingness to lead you to a yes answer. It's much easier to say no. Because it's hard and potentially costly, it doesn't mean it can't be done or shouldn't be done. We owe it to future generations to give it an honest evaluation. It's never going to go away unless we make it go away. Our children and grandchildren will thank us for it.

Design some overnight use with the potential for expansion.

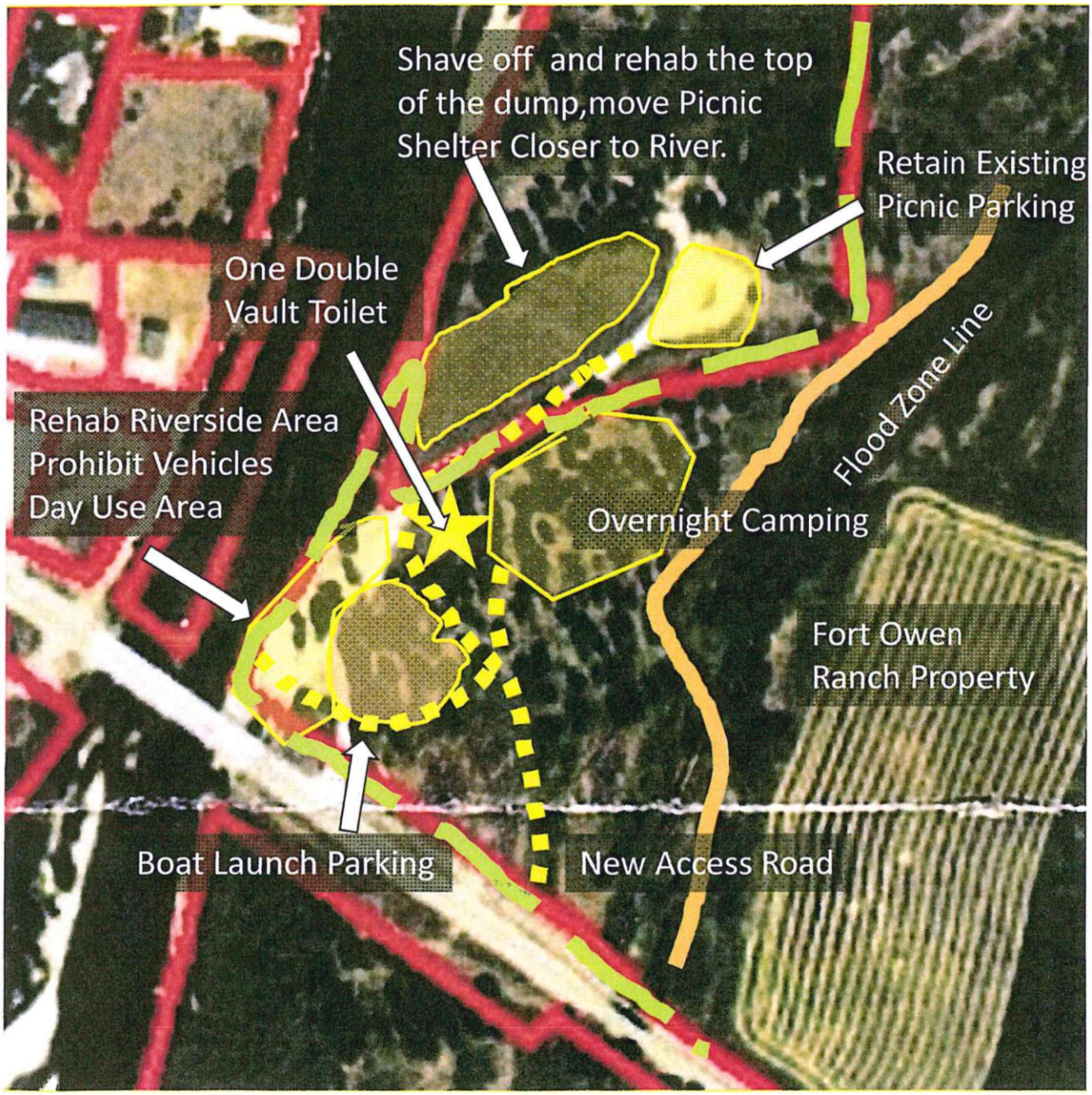
Opportunity for public camping along the River is virtually non-existent. Overnight use comes with many other management issues and facility requirements. Consider putting in a host site so that the site would have 24-hour security. Although Stevensville could use a campground nearby, my experience

suggests that we should think very hard about whether this need should be provided by private campground development instead.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. I look forward to seeing your formal design.

Stevensville Bridge River Park and FAS
Possible Alternative

5/2/2018



APPENDIX E. Best Management Practices for Fishing Access Sites (FWP)

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS
BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
10-02-02 (Updated May 1, 2008)

I. ROADS

A. Road Planning and location

1. Minimize the number of roads constructed at the FAS through comprehensive road planning, recognizing foreseeable future uses.
    a. Use existing roads, unless use of such roads would cause or aggravate an erosion problem.
2. Fit the road to the topography by locating roads on natural benches and following natural contours. Avoid long, steep road grades and narrow canyons.
3. Locate roads on stable geology, including well-drained soils and rock formations that tend to dip into the slope. Avoid slumps and slide-prone areas characterized by steep slopes, highly weathered bedrock, clay beds, concave slopes, hummocky topography, and rock layers that dip parallel to the slope. Avoid wet areas, including seeps, wetlands, wet meadows, and natural drainage channels.
4. Minimize the number of stream crossings.
    a. Choose stable stream crossing sites. "Stable" refers to streambanks with erosion-resistant materials and in hydrologically safe spots.

B. Road Design

1. Design roads to the minimum standard necessary to accommodate anticipated use and equipment. The need for higher engineering standards can be alleviated through proper road-use management. "Standard" refers to road width.
2. Design roads to minimize disruption of natural drainage patterns. Vary road grades to reduce concentrated flow in road drainage ditches, culverts, and on fill slopes and road surfaces.

C. Drainage from Road Surface

1. Provide adequate drainage from the surface of all permanent and temporary roads. Use outsloped, insloped or crowned roads, installing proper drainage features. Space road drainage features so peak flow on road surface or in ditches will not exceed their capacity.
    a. Outsloped roads provide means of dispersing water in a low-energy flow from the road surface. Outsloped roads are appropriate when fill slopes are stable, drainage will not flow directly into stream channels, and transportation safety can be met.
    b. For insloped roads, plan ditch gradients steep enough, generally greater than 2%, but less than 8%, to prevent sediment deposition and ditch erosion. The steeper gradients may be suitable for more stable soils; use the lower gradients for less stable soils.
    c. Design and install road surface drainage features at adequate spacing to control erosion; steeper gradients require more frequent drainage features. Properly constructed drain dips can be an economical method of road surface drainage. Construct drain dips deep enough into the sub-grade so that traffic will not obliterate them.
2. For ditch relief/culverts, construct stable catch basins at stable angles. Protect the inflow end of cross-drain culverts from plugging and armor if in erodible soil. Skewing ditch relief culverts 20 to 30 degrees toward the inflow from the ditch will improve inlet efficiency.

3. Provide energy dissipators (rock piles, slash, log chunks, etc.) where necessary to reduce erosion at outlet of drainage features. Cross-drains, culverts, water bars, dips, and other drainage structures should not discharge onto erodible soils or fill slopes without outfall protection.

4. Route road drainage through adequate filtration zones, or other sediment-settling structures. Install road drainage features above stream crossings to route discharge into filtration zones before entering a stream.

D. Construction/Reconstruction

1. Stabilize erodible, exposed soils by seeding, compacting, riprapping, benching, mulching, or other suitable means.

2. At the toe of potentially erodible fill slopes, particularly near stream channels, pile slash in a row parallel to the road to trap sediment. When done concurrently with road construction, this is one method to effectively control sediment movement and it also provides an economical way of disposing of roadway slash. Limit the height, width and length of these "slash filter windrows" so not to impede wildlife movement. Sediment fabric fences or other methods may be used if effective.

3. Construct cut and fill slopes at stable angles to prevent sloughing and subsequent erosion.

4. Avoid incorporating potentially unstable woody debris in the fill portion of the road prism. Where possible, leave existing rooted trees or shrubs at the toe of the fill slope to stabilize the fill.

5. Place debris, overburden, and other waste materials associated with construction and maintenance activities in a location to avoid entry into streams. Include these waste areas in soil stabilization planning for the road.

6. When using existing roads, reconstruct only to the extent necessary to provide adequate drainage and safety; avoid disturbing stable road surfaces. Consider abandoning existing roads when their use would aggravate erosion.

E. Road Maintenance

1. Grade road surfaces only as often as necessary to maintain a stable running surface and to retain the original surface drainage.

2. Maintain erosion control features through periodic inspection and maintenance, including cleaning dips and cross-drains, repairing ditches, marking culvert inlets to aid in location, and clearing debris from culverts.

3. Avoid cutting the toe of cut slopes when grading roads, pulling ditches, or plowing snow.

4. Avoid using roads during wet periods if such use would likely damage the road drainage features. Consider gates, barricades or signs to limit use of roads during wet periods.

II. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES (parking areas, campsites, trails, ramps, restrooms)

A. Site Design

1. Design a site that best fits the topography, soil type, and stream character, while minimizing soil disturbance and economically accomplishing recreational objectives. Keep roads and parking lots at least 50 feet from water; if closer, mitigate with vegetative buffers as necessary.

2. Locate foot trails to avoid concentrating runoff and provide breaks in grade as needed. Locate trails and parking areas away from natural drainage systems and divert runoff to stable areas. Limit the grade of trails on unstable, saturated, highly erosive, or easily compacted soils

3. Scale the number of boat ramps, campsites, parking areas, bathroom facilities, etc. to be commensurate with existing and anticipated needs. Facilities should not invite such use that natural features will be degraded.

4. Provide adequate barriers to minimize off-road vehicle use

B. Maintenance: Soil Disturbance and Drainage

1. Maintenance operations minimize soil disturbance around parking lots, swimming areas and campsites, through proper placement and dispersal of such facilities or by reseeding disturbed ground. Drainage from such facilities should be promoted through proper grading.

2. Maintain adequate drainage for ramps by keeping side drains functional or by maintaining drainage of road surface above ramps or by crowning (on natural surfaces).

3. Maintain adequate drainage for trails. Use mitigating measures, such as water bars, wood chips, and grass seeding, to reduce erosion on trails.

4. When roads are abandoned during reconstruction or to implement site-control, they must be reseeded and provided with adequate drainage so that periodic maintenance is not required.

III. RAMPS AND STREAM CROSSINGS

A. Legal Requirements

1. Relevant permits must be obtained prior to building bridges across streams or boat ramps. Such permits include the SPA 124 permit, the COE 404 permit, and the DNRC Floodplain Development Permit.

B. Design Considerations

1. Placement of boat ramp should be such that boats can load and unload with out difficulty and the notch in the bank where the ramp was placed does not encourage bank erosion. Extensions of boat ramps beyond the natural bank can also encourage erosion.

2. Adjust the road grade or provide drainage features (e.g. rubber flaps) to reduce the concentration of road drainage to stream crossings and boat ramps. Direct drainage flow through an adequate filtration zone and away from the ramp or crossing through the use of gravel side-drains, crowning (on natural surfaces) or 30-degree angled grooves on concrete ramps.

3. Avoid unimproved stream crossings on permanent streams. On ephemeral streams, when a culvert or bridge is not feasible, locate drive-throughs on a stable, rocky portion of the stream channel.

4. Unimproved (non-concrete) ramps should only be used when the native soils are sufficiently gravelly or rocky to withstand the use at the site and to resist erosion.

C. Installation of Stream Crossings and Ramps

1. Minimize stream channel disturbances and related sediment problems during construction of road and installation of stream crossing structures. Do not place erodible material into stream channels. Remove stockpiled material from high water zones. Locate temporary construction bypass roads in locations where the stream course will have a minimal disturbance. Time the construction activities to protect fisheries and water quality.

2. Where ramps enter the stream channel, they should follow the natural streambed in order to avoid changing stream hydraulics and to optimize use of boat trailers.

3. Use culverts with a minimum diameter of 15 inches for permanent stream crossings and cross drains. Proper sizing of culverts may dictate a larger pipe and should be based on a 50-year flow recurrence interval. Install culverts to conform to the natural streambed and slope on all perennial streams and on intermittent streams that support fish or that provide seasonal fish passage. Place culverts slightly below normal stream grade to avoid culvert outfall barriers. Do not alter stream channels upstream from culverts, unless necessary to protect fill or to prevent culvert blockage. Armor the inlet and/or outlet with rock or other suitable material where needed.

4. Prevent erosion of boat ramps and the affected streambank through proper placement (so as to not catch the stream current) and hardening (riprap or erosion resistant woody vegetation).

5. Maintain a 1-foot minimum cover for culverts 18-36 inches in diameter, and a cover of one-third diameter for larger culverts to prevent crushing by traffic.

APPENDIX F. Tourism Report (Montana Department of Commerce)

TOURISM REPORT

MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Jan Stoddard, Visitor Services Manager
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Project Name: Stevensville Bridge Fishing Access Site Acquisition and Development

Project Description: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to accept the donation of approximately 7 acres of private land along the Bitterroot River at Stevensville Bridge for the purpose of providing public access to the Bitterroot River and developing a fishing access site (FAS). Proposed developments include a parking area, access road, and primitive camping area.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
   NO **YES** If YES, briefly describe:

   Yes, as described, this project has the potential to positively impact the tourism and recreation industry economy. We are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is completed.

   The opportunity to fish Montana waters and native Montana fish populations is marketed to destination visitors from around the world, as well as in-state travelers. Additionally, the State of Montana destination visitor marketing campaigns are specifically targeting destination family travel emphasizing outdoor activities. This includes emphasizing recreational opportunities (floating, fishing, camping, hiking, and sightseeing) in accessible locations. The addition of river access and accompanying amenities (parking, boat ramp, and primitive camping area) to the Bitterroot River at Stevensville Bridge will create an essential asset for developing Montana's outdoor recreation industry.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
   NO **YES** If YES, briefly describe:

   Yes, as described, the project has the potential to improve quality and quantity of tourism and recreational opportunities with the addition of specific amenities (ramp, primitive camp, parking, and access road). Boundary fencing and informational signs are also critical components for long-term sustainability of this asset. We are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

   Signature Jan Stoddard Date: 2/15/18